

Partnerships for Results Track

Partnerships for Protecting Places Workshop

EPA Region 4's Southeastern Ecological Framework: A Partnership Among EPA, Other Federal Agencies, State and County Governments and Universities in the Southeast to Protect Regional Ecosystems

PROBLEM:

One of the biggest threats to the environment is loss of ecological functionality due to fragmentation of natural ecosystems. Highways, sprawl, urban development, and agricultural development often carve natural ecosystems into smaller pieces. This fragmentation of ecosystems is a major cause of the loss of biodiversity and adverse impacts to threatened and endangered species. Fragmentation can also lead to loss of ecosystem function. Many ecological processes, particularly those relating to hydrology, occur over large areas. As the landscape is fragmented, the ecosystems within it no longer have the ability to cleanse the water and trap and prevent pollutants from ending up in our streams and waterways. Many non-point source pollutants such as nutrients, sediments and some heavy metals can be adequately removed if sufficient buffers and natural flow patterns exist, allowing nature to process contaminants over a large enough area. Protection of ecosystem goods and services and of the natural biodiversity within existing natural systems is dependent upon our ability to protect the integrity of the landscape while growing our economies.

INNOVATION:

The Southeastern Ecological Framework is a prototype for the protection of water quality, species habitat, important ecological areas, quality of life and other important natural features by delineating large, intact landscapes and connectivity between such areas. The framework is comprised of important regional ecological hubs and corridors that connect them. The hubs of the framework are typically land areas with important riparian areas, few roads, high habitat diversity, little habitat fragmentation, rare habitats or species, and greater than 5,000 acres in size. Often they are associated with existing managed lands such as wildlife refuges, parks, national forests or private protected lands. The SEF was developed in a innovative partnership between the University of Florida and EPA, and a number of other federal agencies.

RESULTS:

The Southeastern Ecological Framework is a template of important ecological areas that many potential applications: 1) the development of mitigation banks and sites that provide connectivity to larger intact wetland systems; 2) buffering of protected wildlife or natural areas such as wildlife refuges, national parks, state and local parks and private wilderness areas; 3) planning of future road right of ways to minimize impacts on existing natural areas; 4) prioritization for areas in conservation through wetland reserve or conservation reserve programs; 5) siting for reforestation of riparian areas; 6) integration of local greenspace protection efforts into the large regional picture; 7) conservation reserve design and planning for conserving biological diversity.

PARTNERSHIPS:

We are currently working with US Federal Transit Administration (DoT) to develop wetland mitigation bank siting criteria. Region 4 is also using the Framework in collaboration with DOD to work on priorities for land acquisition and management. EPA Region 4 is proposing a collaboration with the US Army Corps of Engineers using the Framework to guide wetland the development of mitigation banks. The criteria used for the SEF are also being used by the State of Florida to help guide land presentation purchase activities. A number of counties across the SE also are using data from the SEF in their efforts to develop greenway plans.

CONTACT:

Cory W. Berish, Ph.D., Chief, Planning & Analysis Branch
US EPA (PAB)
61 Forsyth Street, Atlanta, Georgia 30319
p. (404) 562-8276/ f. (404) 562-8269 Berish.Cory@EPA.Gov

Partnerships for Results Track

Partnerships for Protecting Places Workshop

Region VII Community Partnerships to Prevent Childhood Lead Poisoning

Region VII contains two of the largest lead mining areas in the United States and has historically led the nation in lead mining and refining. There are also several cities in the Region where a majority of the housing stock was built prior to 1978 when lead-based paint was banned. Large numbers of children in mining and urban areas are being exposed to lead and significant percentages of the children under the age of 6 exceed the blood lead health guidelines. Region VII is addressing these issues through its Superfund, Lead and Community-Based Environmental Protection Programs and in partnerships with federal, state and local health agencies, local educators and elected officials, citizen groups and non-profit organizations to provide holistic health-based strategies to protect children from lead poisoning. The positive outcomes of this effort reach far beyond individual project goals and include economic development, citizens who are empowered to make personal and community health decisions, and communities who are engaged in long term environmental planning.

CONTACT:

Kerry Herndon
EPA Region 7
901 N. 5th Street Kansas City, KS 66101
913-551-7286
herndon.kerry@epa.gov

Partnerships for Results Track

Partnerships for Protecting Places Workshop

NJDEP County and Municipal Environmental Performance Partnership Agreements Program

Under the leadership and direction of Commissioner Robert C. Shinn, Jr., the State of New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has implemented a number of high-level management and quality improvement initiatives. These initiatives include the development and issuance of the agency's first strategic plan, its Performance Partnership Agreement with the USEPA, the implementation of a Results-Based Management Reporting System, Business Process Reengineering through information management enhancements, and the Department's participation in the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award process.

It is the Department's strategic plan that serves as its overarching policy document. The plan sets the agency's strategic direction and priorities and identifies strategic themes that the DEP will emphasize and incorporate into its day to day operations. Among these themes are building and strengthening partnerships, designing place-based approaches to environmental management and utilizing results-based management principles and processes. The DEP has been incorporating these strategic themes into its operations through a new and innovative program called County and Municipal Local Environmental Performance Partnership Agreements (Local PPA's).

The Local PPA's are designed to enhance the capacity of the participating county or municipality to protect and manage environmental issues, accelerate environmental improvements, and link local economic development opportunities with environmental improvements. The intent of the agreements is to focus the resources and technical expertise of the DEP on a single, jurisdictional boundary in a holistic, multi-media, and cross-program manner. Each agreement centers on the environmental issues, concerns and projects identified by the county or municipality and contains an action plan with a shared set of environmental goals, objectives and performance indicators.

Commissioner Shinn has signed two Local Environmental PPA's, the first with the City of Bayonne and the second with the County of Hudson, and the Department is currently working on developing agreements with the Cities of Perth Amboy and Pemberton, and the County of Burlington. In the coming months, the DEP is planning to expand the Local Environmental PPA effort to include other counties and municipalities throughout the State and will work to institutionalize the program.

CONTACT:

Joe Genovay, Office of the Commissioner, Department of Environmental Protection
PO Box 402 401 E. State Street, Trenton, NJ 08625-0402
609-633-1238
jgenovay@dep.state.nj.us